

My point is that neither the increase in the Medicare eligibility age nor means testing are necessary to solve the short-term financial problems of the Medicare system. Instead, these are issues that the new commission should look at. In making significant changes to the Medicare program—among the most successful Federal programs ever—we need to do so with great thoughtfulness and deliberation.

These changes have no immediate impact on the Medicare trust fund or on our general goal of balancing the overall Federal budget by 2002. In short, there is no reason why we cannot wait until we have the benefit of the recommendations of the bipartisan commission—within the next year—before we take action of this nature. That is why I supported taking these changes out of the budget bill, and why I supported Senator REED's alternative Medicare proposal to make only those changes needed to make sure that Medicare remains financially solvent.

MEDICARE PROVISIONS

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, the Senate took several difficult votes in the last two days related to Medicare reform. After carefully considering each of the amendments offered in the Senate, I cast my vote in favor of preserving and protecting the long-term solvency of the Medicare system.

I voted for an amendment to eliminate the bill's provisions which would require means testing of Medicare premiums. I also voted for an amendment which would have simply delayed the implementation of premium means testing until the year 2000. I believe it is foolish to hastily make such a drastic change as this without the benefit of an indepth study of the entire Medicare Program. Unfortunately, both of these amendments failed.

I am concerned about the bill's provisions which would delay the eligibility age for Medicare to 67 from the current age of 65. However, the bill would not implement this change until the year 2003, which will not affect current beneficiaries and, I believe, will allow us to assess this change within the context of a larger study of the program.

The bill does establish a bipartisan commission to study the entire Medicare Program and make recommendations for the changes necessary to keep the program solvent beyond the year 2001, which is when the trustees have reported the program will be bankrupt. I believe we should wait for the commission's recommendations before enacting any fundamental changes to the program. However, I felt it was important to show a willingness to consider taking a first step toward long-term structural changes in order to give impetus to the commission's work.

The budget reconciliation bill before the Senate contains many key provisions to expand benefits under Medicare and incorporate choice and competition into the current program. For example, the bill authorizes Medicare coverage of mammography screening,

colorectal screening, bone mass measurement, and diabetes management. It also creates a Medicare Choice Program and a demonstration program for medical savings accounts for seniors. It contains provisions designed to eliminate waste and fraud in the Medicare system which could result in significant savings. These are improvements to Medicare for which I have fought for many years.

I believe firmly that our priority must remain protecting the Medicare system from bankruptcy by the year 2001, and I will continue to work toward that goal.

AMENDMENT NO. 482

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the Levin-Jeffords amendment increases from 12 to 24 months the limit on the amount of vocational education training that a State can count toward meeting its work requirement under the new Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program. Under the old welfare law, recipients could attend postsecondary vocational education training for up to 24 months. I strongly support the new law's emphasis on moving welfare recipients more quickly into jobs, but I am troubled by the law's restriction on vocational education training, limiting it to 12 months. Two-year community college study, for instance, would not meet the requirement.

Mr. President, the limitation on postsecondary education training raises a number of concerns, not the least of which is whether persons may be forced into low-paying, short-term employment that will lead them back onto public assistance because they are unable to support their families.

Study after study indicates that short-term training programs raise the income of workers only marginally, while completion of at least a 2-year associate degree has greater potential of breaking the cycle of poverty for welfare recipients. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median earnings of adults with an associate degree are 30 percent higher than adults with only a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent.

Mr. President, let me just give some examples. The following are jobs that a person could prepare for in a two-year community college program and the salary range generally applicable to the positions:

NATIONWIDE

Accounting, \$14,000–\$28,000.
Computer technician, \$14,000–\$31,000.
Law enforcement, \$13,500–\$25,000.
Dental hygiene, \$18,000–\$60,000.
Respiratory therapy tech, \$21,000–\$32,000.

MICHIGAN

Computer programing, \$24,800–\$42,900.
Radiology technician, \$22,235–\$32,425.
Legal assistant, \$28,630–\$30,000.
Child care development (supervisor), \$23,590–\$29,724.
Registered nurse, \$24,400–\$38,135.

Mr. President, the National Governors Association recognizes the merits of this amendment and has called for its passage. I urge my colleagues to

support it because it will help us reach the new law's intended goal of getting families permanently off of welfare and onto self-sufficiency.

In closing, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD two articles that are relevant to this issue which appeared in the February 17, 1997, USA Today and the June 1, 1996, New York Times.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From USA Today, Feb. 17, 1997]

COLLEGE OFF LIMITS IN WELFARE PLAN

(By John Ritter)

States rushing to get welfare recipients off the rolls and into jobs are telling some college students on public assistance to drop out and find work.

Under the old welfare system, recipients of cash grants could go to school full-time. The new law, with its emphasis on moving welfare recipients quickly into jobs, restricts educational options.

Short-term job training and a year of vocational education are approved "work activities" under the new federal law, passed last year, but regular college and community college study are not.

So even as President Clinton preaches education as the route to prosperity, welfare reform is forcing recipients—predominantly single mothers—to forsake school for low-paying jobs.

States must put bigger proportions of their welfare caseloads to work—25% this year, 50% by 2002—or lose funds.

"The emphasis has shifted from how can we retrain people or pick up where their education left off to how can we move them into work," says Elaine Ryan of the American Public Welfare Association.

By one estimate, as many as 700,000 single parents on welfare are enrolled in higher education and training.

In California, 125,000 welfare recipients attend community colleges. The City University of New York system has 20,500 welfare students.

Schools already are lobbying state legislatures to find ways to keep these students and their tuition reimbursements.

But prospects are not bright.

[From the New York Times, June 1, 1996]

WORKFARE RULES CAUSE ENROLLMENT TO FALL, CUNY SAYS

(By Karen W. Orenson)

New rules introduced by New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's administration that require all welfare recipients to work have led thousands of students to drop out of college or not enroll, according to officials at the City University of New York. The decline in enrollment is significant, CUNY officials say, because studies show that college gives people on welfare a good chance to get better jobs at higher pay.

Mr. DOMENICI addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, let me take 1 minute, and then we are going to final passage. I want to thank everybody for their cooperation. Under a very difficult process and procedure, I think we did very well. On a number of issues, there was great bipartisan support. I thank those on the other side of the aisle who have supported this over-all package, and I hope the vote is overwhelming. Tonight we complete